Government borrowings from National Small Savings Fund have remained unchanged at 9.5% since 1.4.2003. Similarly, the rates of interest on small savings schemes have remained unchanged with effect from 1.3.2003. As such, there has been no adverse impact on depositors.

Pending applications for issue of PAN cards

2173. SHRIMATI JAYA BACHCHAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the number of applications pending for issue of PAN card;

(b) what is the time normally taken to issue PAN card;

(c) whether it is a fact that applications as old as 1998 are still pending for issue of PAN cards, if so, the reasons therefore; and

(d) what action Government have taken to clear the backlog?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) As on 30.11.2006, 1,74,857 applications were pending for issue of PAN cards.

(b) PAN card is issue normally within 15 days of receipt of application. From 01.04.2005 to 30.11.2006, PAN cards were dispatched within stipulated period. Delay beyond 15 days arises mainly due to defective/ incomplete applications.

(c) and (d) Before outsourcing the work relating to allotment of PAN, the Income-tax Department had directed its officers to allot PAN in all cases where complete applications had been received. However, persons who were allotted PAN before 1.7.2003 but did not receive the PAN card are required to apply to the service provider for obtaining the PAN card.

FDI in Insurance Sector

2174. MAULANA OBAIDULLAH KHAN AZMI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have since taken any decision in regard to the increase of Foreign Investment in Insurance from 26 percent to 49 percent;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof and in what manner the same is proposed to be implemented; and

(c) if not, what is the latest progress in the matter and by when a final decision is likely to be arrived at in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) to (c) A proposal to increase the Foreign Direct Investment limit in the Insurance Sector from 26% to 49% is under consideration of the Government.

Impact of strikes on Public Sector Banks

2175. DR. K. MALAISAMY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the extent of inconvenience, loss and erosion of market to the Public Sector Banks due to frequent occurrences of strikes in Government owned banks; and

(b) what are the steps initiated to avert this kind of stalemate in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) It is not possible to estimate the inconvenience, loss and erosion of market to the Public Sector Banks due to strikes.

(b) A statutory body *viz.* Chief Labour Commissioner (Central) in Government is in place to negotiate with the employees to avert this kind of stalemate.

Grants to Bihar

†2176. SHRI MAHENDRA SAHNI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government provide 90 percent grant to Bihar under the Externally Aided Projects; and

(b) if so, the details of grants provided to States each year during the last three years?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.